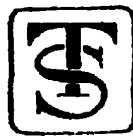


THE MUTINY PERIOD IN CACHAR

Edited by
Sujit Choudhury



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The manuscript, *The Mutiny Period in Cachar*, was handed over to the Tagore Society for Cultural Integration for publication by Mr. A. F. Golam Osmani, Barrister at Law and a Minister, at present, in the Assam cabinet. Mr. Osmani received the same through Mr. Taramoni Choudhury of Silchar who had been a friend of Late Robert Reid from whose belongings this manuscript was discovered after his death.

Robert Reid's father, James Reid, arrived at Silchar from England in the early years of this century to work as a tea garden manager. During his stay at Cachar in connection with this assignment, he fell in love with a local Muslim Bengali lady and married her. Late Robert and his brother, Mr. William Reid, who is now staying in London, are offsprings of that union.

It is difficult to ascertain who was the compiler of this tract. A careful reading of the text, however, suggests that it was possibly originally compiled by someone having a link with the planter's lobby in the district.

We are grateful to the unknown compiler for leaving behind a very valuable historical sketch. Our very special thanks to Mr. A. F. Golam Osmani for his invaluable help without which this publication would not have seen the light of day.

H. Gupta
S. Choudhury

EDITOR'S NOTE

I

The rising of 1857 was no doubt a major event that left a deep imprint on the future course of our national history. Cachar, a remote district of the British India also felt the impact of this rebellion, though the people of the district did not take a direct part in it. This book, *The Mutiny Period in Cachar*, shows 'how far the Indian Mutiny of 1857 affected Cachar' and we hope a reader will find the narratives, compiled from the despatches of Captain Robert Stewart, Superintendent of Cachar (1857-58), quite useful and interesting. We are aware of the fact that a number of historians resent the use of the word 'mutiny' while discussing the events of the year 1857, but we retain the title given in the original manuscript.

It should be mentioned here that historians, who dealt with the mutiny period of this region, did not pay much attention to the happenings in Cachar during the year 1857-58. Gait in his *History of Assam* summarised the entire course of events in three or four sentences, and H. K. Barpujari in his *Assam : in the days of the Company* did not mention Cachar at all. Even J. B. Bhattacharyya who worked exclusively on Cachar could not spare more than one para on the subject in his book *Cachar under British Rule in North East India*. So Reid's work, we hope, will meet a long-felt demand of the people who want to know this region and its past more meaningfully.

II

Besides highlighting the major events of the mutiny, Reid's compilation throws light on the functional and operational aspects of the British administration of the day and also on the personal character of Capt. Stewart, the Superintendent of Cachar.

It appears that the British administration had already established its grip over this recently conquered territory and the administrative net-work was efficient as well as trustworthy. Though there was neither a railway track nor a telegraph line in this part of the country at that time, the British had a very reliable system of communication. It is evident from the letter written by Capt. Stewart on Dec, 22, 1857 where he mentioned the encounter that took place at Latu on the 18th, and also the subsequent events which took place on the 19th, the 20th and the 21st. The system of receiving and despatching messages was so much developed that Stewart actually expressed his worry in one of his notes when he did not receive any message from Sylhet for only a short span of four days.

Capt. Stewart's notes also reveal the true attitude of a British colonial administrator towards the natives. More than once he hinted at the rapacity of the Bengalees and unreliable character of the Manipuris. But he himself did not mind inciting the lust of simple-minded tribals. He almost gleefully wrote, "I have therefore sent a small party bearing a token from me to the villages of Lhoochais, with message to the following effect..... That the men themselves are most probably wealthy,

and it will afford easy and good plunder, and that moreover I will give Rs 50/- for each sepoy for whom they account to me.....I am of the opinion that the march they have undertaken is more hazardous than they expected and that such a small body offering such a rich prize to the savage and war-like people through whom they travel will have no chance of escape." There were children and women with the mutineers and Stewart in any of his despatches did not express any pity or sympathy for their death and suffering.

Though the East India Company was in possession of a vast dominion at that time, it retained a commercial undertone while running its administrative affairs. The officers of the Company were also quite aware of this attitude. Stewart was very much keen to justify every extra pence he was spending to meet an unusual situation. His suggestion to demand money from the king of Manipur for the maintenance of the Manipuri Princes with the plea that it was necessary for the security of the king himself clearly betrays that the Company believed in bargaining even over a purely political issue.

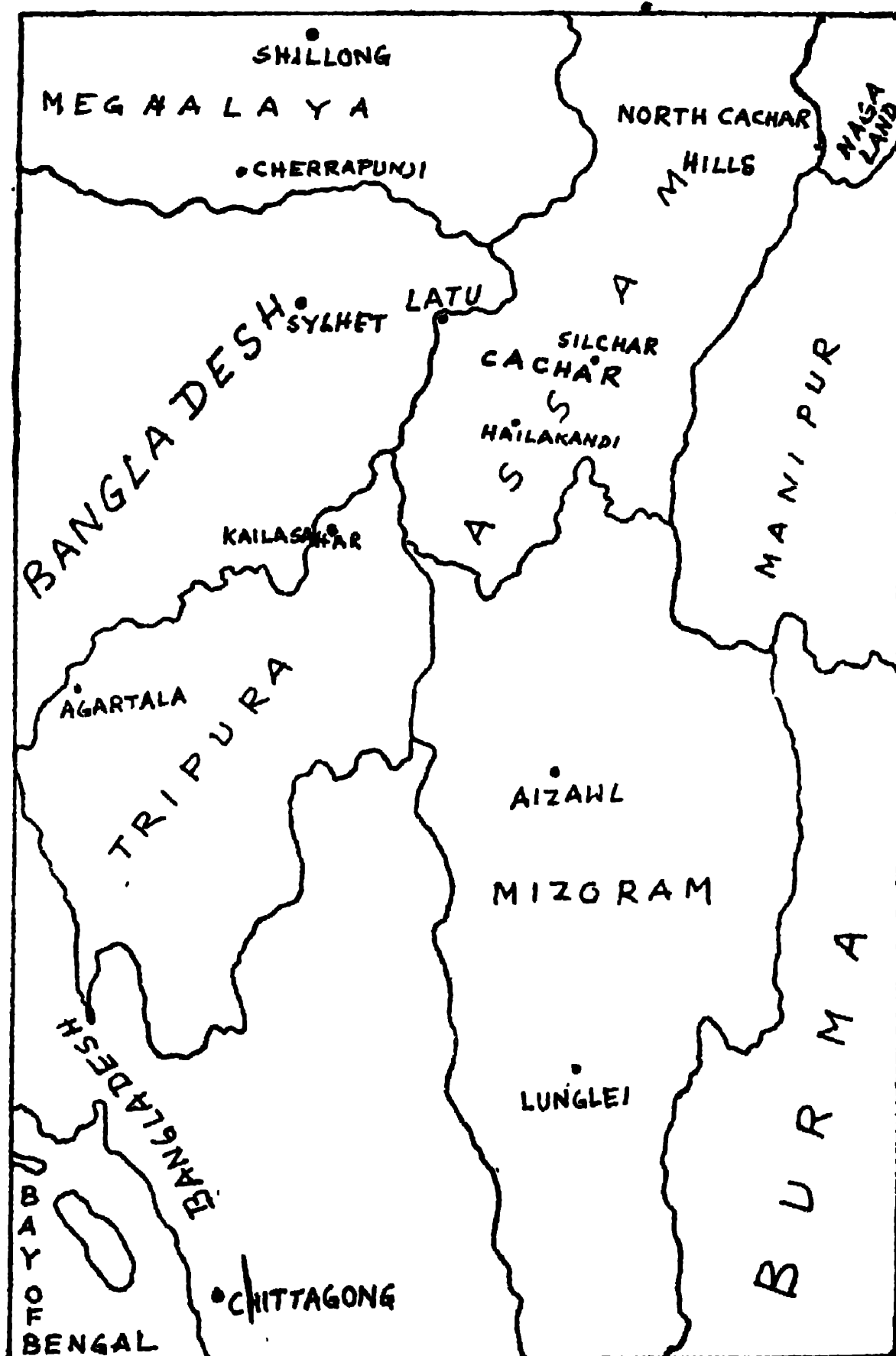
As to the personal character of Capt. Stewart, as it was revealed in his notes, one must admit that he had a number of commendable traits. As a general, his plans were faultless. He was a dauntless man who was confident of his success in case of an encounter with the sepoys though the latter were numerically stronger. His appreciation of the faithful members of the Sylhet Light Infantry speaks of his judicious nature. That he had a deep sense of justice is more clearly evident when he

tried the case of Norindrajeet Sing, the rebel prince of Manipur. He also sympathetically treated a 16 years old son of a rebel and he was genuinely alarmed when he learnt of a possible miscarriage of justice in which Sheikh Faqueer, an innocent companion of the mutineers was involved.

III

The happenings in Cachar during the Mutiny are normally dismissed by the historians as insignificant. But Capt. Stewart held a different view. He asked the government to invest him with the powers under Act XI of 1837 as it was apparent to him that a section of their own subjects of the district were in rebellion against the government. He had genuine apprehension that a section of his own troop might join the Manipuris and there was intelligence that there was a plan to attack the treasury and the magazine. There can be no denial of the fact that the bordering district of Cachar, surrounded by the warlike tribal population in three sides, and surcharged by the presence of the mutinous sepoys, created a situation of potential danger. Stewart could not do away with the hang over of this situation even when the mutiny was all over, and drew out a detailed plan for the defence of the district. Further investigations into the subject may prove that the apprehensions of Capt. Stewart were not completely unfounded, and subsequent series of tribal risings, that kept Cachar under a dark shadow for a pretty long time, might have drawn their inspiration from the mutiny.

S. C.



THE MUTINY PERIOD IN CACHAR

**Correspondence of Capt. Robt. Stewart,
Supdt. Cachar, 1857-58.**

In order to show how far the Indian Mutiny of 1857 affected Cachar it might be worthwhile to trace a little of the history of the Mutiny itself. On January 23rd, 1857, the troops at Dumdum, near Calcutta, openly displayed their aversion to the cartridges supplied, and before that time there was general unrest indicated by the fact that Chuppattis began to circulate from village to village and there was also a similar circulation of lotus flowers, but these were among regiments only. No one knew where this began, but it was suggested that it came from Delhi.

On march 29th. the adjutant of the 34th. native Infantry was cut down on the parade ground at Barrackpor. This was followed by numerous incendiary fires at Barrackpore and in March and April twenty-five similar fires occurred at Umballa. At Meerut the man of the 3rd Cavalry refused the cartridges, and on May 3rd. the 7th Oudh Infantry mutinied at Lucknow. The following Sunday while service was being held in the evening, the Cavalry and two Infantry regiments broke the jail, released their comrades, murdered every European on whom they could lay hands and hurried off to Delhi. The beginning of the Mutiny is usually counted from that day, May 10th.

We can now see how it affected Cachar. It is obvious that the Superintendent of Cachar had been warned to send weekly reports and from June 10th. until December the following reports were sent beginning with this letter.

“To the Secretary to the Government of Bengal,
Fort William,
From R. Stewart, offg. Supdt ; Cachar
Dated, Cachar 10th June, 1857.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 2509 of the 23rd ultimo, and I have much pleasure in reporting for the information of His Honor that the popular mind in Cachar seems in no way affected by the disturbances which are occurring in the North West. The Bengalee proclamation received by me was duly distributed, and the condition of the district is as peaceable as it possibly could be, there being no appearance of popular movement or excitement deserving of any notice. Regular reports will be transmitted on Saturdays.”

From the 13th of June and until December the following letter is sent each week.

“I have the honour to report for the information of the Lieutenant-Governor and in continuance of my letter dated 10th inst. that all remains quiet in Cachar.”

But on the 7th December, 1857, the following letter is sent to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

“Sir,

1. I have the honour to report for the information of the Leut. Governor of Bengal that having received intelligence of the Mutiny of the 3 companies of Sepoys at Chittagong, and of their having quitted the high road in the march north west, and entered the hill to the east, and being also put on my guard as to the chance of their continuing their march eastwards among these hills, and perhaps debouching into the plains at Cachar I have also taken the following measures to have them opposed.

2. His Honor knows that the country directly south of Cachar is a vast tract of hills and jungle occupied by an independent and savage tribe called the Lhoochai [¹], who at one time used to give us considerable trouble, but with whom our relations have been most amicable for some years past.

3. If the mutineers continue their march eastward they must pass through the residences of these people, and such is the intricate nature of the country, that if opposed by the inhabitants they would have but little chance of escaping, but would, in my opinion, be almost sure to be cut off in sudden attacks and ambushes.

4. I have therefore sent a small party bearing a token from me to the villages of Lhoochais, with messages to the following effect. That if men come to

them through the jungle from the west with* red coats and heavily laden, they are our enemies and must be opposed in every possible way, if it is the wish of the Lhoochais to endeavour to please our Government. That the men themselves are most probably wealthy, and it will afford easy and good plunder, and that moreover I will give Rs. 50/- for each sepoy for whom they account to me.

5. I have guards posted at the two chief approaches from the south, and have scouts occupied in the same direction to bring me intelligence should the mutineers make their appearance by if they are coming this way at all, I am of the opinion that the march they have undertaken is more hazardous than they expected, and that such a small body offering such a rich prize to the savage and warlike people through whom they travel will have no chance of escape.

6. Should however they make good their march and enter Cachar, small as is the number of sepoys we have got in the place, and although the guns were the other day withdrawn to Sylhet, I hope we will be able to give them a warm reception.

7. I trust the arrangement I have made with reference to the advance of these mutineers will give satisfaction to His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

8. The party I have deputed to the Lhoochais country not being part of my establishment I shall submit hereafter a bill for expenses incurred by their deputation for the sanction of the Lt. Governor.

9. In conclusion I would strongly urge upon His Honor the expediency of posting more troops in this district. Most of them at present in Cachar are detached in small outposts, and but very few remain in the Sudder station. Hardly a soldier can be withdrawn without difficulty, should any emergency call for the services of a small body in the field, and should a party of Munipoories now start on an invasion on Munipoor, as has been so frequently the case before, I should have no men to send after them to assist the Rajah as it is required of me to do [²]. Moreover, the withdrawal of the guns and the sepoys accompanying them have given rise to reports, in which although there is little dependence to be placed, yet must have originated in something. Rumour says that an invasion of Munipoor has been projected among the Munipoories of Cachar, and that it is intended that an attack should in the first place be made on the Magazine here for the purpose of obtaining a supply of ammunition for the expedition.

10. I neither credit the above in its entirety nor do I think that were the attack made it would meet with anything but complete failure. But still with so many ambitious Munipoorie Princes in the country who have their eye upon Munipoor and who cannot have failed to perceive the removal of our guns and sepoys from this place and to fancy that we were much weakened thereby and could not oppose their object, I think some movement on their part imminent, and trust that His

Honor will agree with me, and put into my "possession the means of averting it".

The following Saturday Stewart again reports that all remains quiet and the same report is sent in on the 19th of December. But on December 22nd, Stewart writes to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

1. ".....late on the night of the 19th instant I received a letter from Mr. Dodd, who had accompanied the force sent with Major Byng from Sylhet in pursuit of the mutineers of the 34th N. Infry ; informing me that after having marched to Pertabghur [⁸], Major Byng's force, upon certain information received counter-marched to Latoo on the river Khosiara, and there had an engagement with the mutineers on the morning of the 18th, in which they were completely routed with a loss of about 30 men. The remainder had fled, it was said, in the direction of Pertabghur with a view to make towards Cachar and Munipoor.

2. Upon receipt of this information I immediately directed Lt. Ross, Comdg ; the Detachment S. L. Infry ; at this station to proceed with 50 men of his Regt ; to which I added 25 of the Kookie Levy, and take up position at Panchgan, a village twelve miles to the west of this, which commands the western entrance into this district along the river, and is also a favourable position with reference to any operations along the line of hills running south, forming the boundary between this

Zillah and Sylhet, and where it is now probable that the mutineers will endeavour to cross.

3. Lt. Ross started early on the morning of the 20th and has directions to remain at Panchgan until he hears certain intelligence of the movements of the enemy, when he is desired to act upon his own discretion. But upon being foiled or in the event of the mutineers escaping anywhere to the east of him, he is to fall back again on the Sudder station.

4. I have directed the Darogahs of my two thannas in that direction to report immediately to Lt. Ross any information they may receive and have also ordered the scouts, I have detached to the south and west, to make their reports to the same officer.

5. Since Lt. Ross' departure I have received a letter from the Darogah of Latoo in Sylhet, informing me that the mutineers had passed the night of the 19th at Devalia Bunn, in Sylhet. I have also received a letter from chowdhury of Juffirghur [⁴] in Sylhet, apprising me of their having gone Eastward with a view to cross over the hills into my pergunnah of Serespore and Hyliakandy, both these letters I communicated on that day I received them (21st) to Lt. Ross.

6. I heard yesterday from Lt. Ross, who still remained at Panchgan. He forwarded to me a note from Lt. Sherer, who on Major Byng's demise [⁵] has assumed command of the Detachment on the field in Sylhet. He mentions that the mutineers have split into 3 or 4 different parties and all made for the east ; one

party 40 to 50 strong, he reports as having gone in the direction of Budderpoor which is close to Lt. Ross' position. But I am inclined to believe the reports which point to a more southern portion of the Serespore range as the place of their crossing.

7. Consequently on Lt. Ross' detachment with 75 men, the Sudder station being weakened in troops, I have drawn in several guards from the north and east, to reinforce it, and have now nearly a hundred sepoy under arms at this place. An outpost at Jalinga to the south-west I have relieved by placing in the stockade 12 armed Kookies from a village in the grant of the Cachar Tea Company [6], having withdrawn the men of the levy who were posted there. To the Kookie villagers, while so employed, I have promised the pay of sepoy.

8. I have also entertained a temporary establishment of 10 men as scouts, for the procurement of intelligence and collection of supplies, and have increased the police establishment of the 3 Thannas of my district by 8 Burkundazea, four for the Sudder Thanna and two for each of the others for the same purpose.

9. I hope that the arrangements I have made will meet with the approval of His Honor. They would have all been made before had there been any sure intelligence of the intentions of the mutineers. But the latter having all along confined themselves to the Southern Jungles of Sylhet, I was not assured of their near approach until Major Byng met them at Latoo and until then had only

employed the fixed establishment at my disposal, and then too only to the south of my own district towards which, according to all reports, the mutineers were making.

P. S. —I have just received a note from Lt. Ross stating that having heard of the mutineers being on the western slopes of the Serespoor Hills, near a village called Companygunge, he marched last evening with a view to intercept them. The only fear now is that they may march too during the night and crossed the valley and escaped him.”

On the 24th December, Stewart again writes :—

1. Lieut. Ross having heard of the mutineers as being at Chandpur in the Pergunnah Serespore, marched up the Hyliakandy Valley, starting on the evening of the 21st from Panchgoan. He reached Companygunge early in the morning of the 22nd but found that the mutineers had crossed the valley during the night and made for the hills and Jungles on the Eastern side opposite the Mouza of Mohunpoor.

2. Crossing the valley during the day, he entered the hills and encountered the enemy who had taken up their position on a hillock within the heavy Jungles. The ground appears to have been in every way unsuited for fighting, the jungle being thick, but an engagement took place in which some dozen of the mutineers were killed, the remainder escaping through the jungle to the

south-east. The loss on our side was one man killed, three wounded and one missing.

3. Night having come on and my direction to Lt. Ross being to fall back upon the station should the mutineers escape him to the east, in order that fresh measures might be organised in another direction, he returned here yesterday morning.

4. Relieving the men he brought with him, I immediately despatched Lt. Ross with 75 men, to the Chutla Bheel, where it is expected the mutineers will next make their appearance. He will have there as auxiliaries some 40 armed Kookies belonging to the Cachar Tea Company, to whom I supplied muskets ammunition a few days ago.

5. With regard to the station itself I have placed pickets all round the threatened directions to give notice of any approach and we are quite prepared to meet them if they come. But they are much weakened by hunger and fatigue, and will not, I think, face the the open country.

6. The conduct of the S. L. Infry is said to have been most excellent throughout the engagement which took place. Distant not more than 30 yards from the enemy while firing, the latter tried to gain them over by every art of appealing to their religious feelings as well as nationality. Failing this they taunted them by calling them "KRISTIAN KA KOOTAS" and "GOLA-MIES" but they received for answer only bullets and abuse.

7. I have not had a single letter, note or communication from Sylhet for the last four days, and do not know anything of what is going on in that direction or what measures are being undertaken to reinforce me here. The mutineers are still two hundred strong and I have not anything like equal numbers to oppose them. Superior numbers are required in order to surround them in the jungle, else it will be nothing but a running fight the whole way through to Munipoor, whither it is now certain that the 34th are bent upon going. I am not even strong enough to despatch a force after them should they get out of my district and pursuing force would be most desirable.

8. I have kept Captain McCulloch well informed of the events which have been taking place and have desired him to put the Rajah on his guard.

9. Two of the 34th have been brought in as prisoners and are being tried by me today."

On the 26th of December the following letter appears :—

1. ".....Lt. Ross again came upon the mutineers on the afternoon on the 24th instant in the valley of the Jalinga whither I had sent him on his return from Hyliakandy.

2. The mutinners showed no fight but fled after the first Volley, our men in pursuit firing into their rear and killing several. In their flight the enemy have thrown down several muskets, their bags of rice and

of rupees, and ran to make for the south-east escaping into the dense jungle in that direction.

3. Lt. Ross returned to the station yesterday, which was a bad move as it has lost us oneday, and has added twelve miles to the march of our troops. But not being able to follow them up directly, he returned, without doing so in a parallel direction, which he might have done had he been better acquainted with the country.

4. I have now send him to Kazeedhur in Bundraj, still further to the east. There again to await the exodus of the mutineers into the plains and I hope my plan will prove successful.

5. A detachment of the Sylhet light Infy., under Captain Stevens will be here to-day. These I intend despatching to Singerbund, south of Luckipoor, where they will have a good chance of intercepting the 34th should they escape Lt. Ross and whence should they enter Munipoor. Captain Stevens will follow with a view of assisting the Political Agent and the Rajah. [7]

6. The people of this district are much alarmed, the Bengalees being in the greatest of fear. The budma-shes are all on the look out for a favourable opportunity to plunder and one considerable dacoity has already taken place.

7. The Munnipoories in Cachar seems anxious to take hold of this opportunity to carry out their views h reference to their own country and are intriguing

and plotting an invasion of Munnipoor. I have three of their Princes under arrest on suspicion.

8. The two prisonors taken by the detachment, Sylhet Light Infantry, were tried by me and shot on the 24th instant. The usual form herewith enclose.

9. The report in Sylhet of the entire dispersion of the mutineers after the action at Latoo [8] is wrong. They are still 200 strong with abundance of arms and ammunition and have determined purpose of pushing eastwards under the mistaken impression that they can go via Munnipoor to Nepal and hence to their own country."

Cachar, 26th December, 1857.

To

Captain Stevens,

Comdg. Sylhet Light Infantry.

Sir,

I have the honor to bring to your favourable notice the conduct of the marginally noted men of your Battalion.

2. These men formed a guard sent with 4 boxes of ammunition to Major Byng at Pertabghur. Thither they went but on reaching that place they found Major Byng had proceeded to Latoo.

They followed him down the valley of Pertabghur to Latoo and after the action were again sent off to Cachar by Lt. Sherer. On their way they encountered

some fugitive mutineers and made prisoners of two of them whom they brought into me,

I have, etc.
R. S. STEWART,
Offg. Supdt.

The names of eight men are in the margin, SROOP SING, RAMDEEN SING, PARIK SING, DAMEER SING, RAJCOOMER SING, SORRA RAM, KUJUN-
DER SING AND LUCHMEN SING.

The next letter is dated 2nd. January, 1858.

1. "....." After the fight at Jalingah the mutineers pursued a south-eastern course and entered the heavy and dense jungles of Chuttla Howar [⁹], where they remained wandering about for five days, during this time they did not obtain one particle of nutritious food, but were compelled to eat jungle roots and berries.

2. They were tracked up by Kookie scouts and were found not to be making more than four miles a day and that too in a circuitous direction. The scouts came across several of them who had died of hunger and disease and also on the bodies of several of their children whom they had dashed on the ground being unable to carry on. The scouts also killed two sepoys, stragglers and made prisoners of a Chittagong Kaider and a Seikh Faqueer.

3. These scouts were the men of Kookie village on the lands of the Cachar Tea Company, supplied by me

with fire-arms, and I beg to bring to your Honor's favourable notice the conduct of Mr. James Davidson, the manager of that company, who directed them and who during the five days that the mutineers were wandering in the wilderness, kept me continually supplied with excellent and reliable information concerning their movements.

4. Hts Honor will perceive that during the time that they were thus wandering in the jungles, natural causes alone were acting against them as not to call for direct opposition on the small force at my disposal. But when I heard of their having approached the eastern parts of the jungles facing the Pergunnah of Bunderaj, I directed Captain Stevens, who was posted by me with one hundred men at Sinaimookh, to proceed with 50 picked men to their rear and drive them down upon Lt. Ross, who taken up a position at Nugdingram in the Bunderaj, when they would have been placed between two forces.

5. Before however Captain Stevens received my communication he had at the requisition of Lt. Ross moved down with whole force to Negdingram. The circumstances of this move were as follows :—

The mutineers had come across the Kheddar establishment of Major Smith in the heart of Jungles and had driven them in on the night of the 30th, Plundering them of about a day's provisions. I am not able to find out if this Major Smith later turned to tea, Mr. A. M. Smith at one time inherited Dholai and Kukicherra.

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The exaggerated reports given by these people of the numbers and desperation of the enemy had impressed Lt. Ross with the idea that his 75 men might not be able to cope with them, and he accordingly sent for assistance.

6. On the morning of the 31st the mutineers debouched into the jungles of Bundraj, and were immediately attacked by captain Stevens and Lt. Ross. They did not wait the assault, but immediately took to flight and crossing the Soonai River entered the jungles on the east side. The firing of our men was at too great a distance to make much affect but I learned from prisoners since taken that both the Subadars of the party were severely wounded.

7. Captain Stevens' march from Soonaimook rather disconcerted the plans I had arranged. He had been posted there with a view of marching to Binnakandy, where the rebels had crossed the Soonai and of intercepting them there while Lt. Ross followed up in the rear. When I requested him to move with 50 picked men to the rear of the enemy while west of Soonai, the 50 he would have left behind at Soonaimukh, reinforced by Lt. Binst. who had arrived with 50 more on the 31st, were ready to have taken the same place. Now, however, Lt. Ross. and Captain Stevens with 175 men being together in the rear of the enemy, Lt. Binst with 50 has been placed by me at Captain Stevens disposal to be employed as he may direct.

8. The march of the mutineers will now lie through

the dense jungles at the foot of the Booban-range, which they will skirt. My instruction to Captain Stevens are to follow them along the plains in a parallel direction, keeping a little to their rear and preventing them from coming out to forage within the cultivated lands, also to send in his Lieuts, with strong parties to take up positions with the jungles to their front, thus bringing them between fires. With these instructions Captain Stevens has advanced to Gobindnagar and Lieut. Ross has been sent on to Casstainpoor.

9. I will not fail to communicate for the information of the Lt. Governor any subsequent operation which may take place and I hope that what has already been done will meet with his approval. The mutineers have not been able while in Cachar to inflict the slightest injury on the Government or the people. Confined to the densest they (the mutineers) have been brought to lowest physical condition of human beings, the prisoners taken being reduced to living skeletons. They have been met and beaten at each of the three places where they endeavoured to enter the plains, and are broken in spirits and reduced in number, although Captain Stevens still reports them at 150.

10. A jemadar and 16 men of the Sylhet Light Infantry dispatched from Sylhet after 10 of the mutineers who had separated from the main body at Latoo, pursued them into my district, overtook them at Mohimpoor in Hylakandy, killed 8 of them and the remaining two were captured by my police.

11. Four sepoys, a bheestee, 3 women and children were brought in prisoners to-day by Major Smith's Kheddah Establishment and besides these there are now in my jail 5 more belonging to the party all awaiting trial. Captain Stevens is also cutting off foraging parties and stragglers on his march.

12. From Munnipoor I have heard from Major McCulloch that the Rajah has despatched 400 men towards his frontier to give assistance and to cut off the mutineers should they cross the border. His force has been placed under my orders and I have directed the Major Commanding to confine his operations solely in the Munnipoor territory. He has my orders to halt at Noonshinbong, and to send to Luckipoor for provisions, where I have made arrangements to supply him, and also 100 men of the Sylhet Light Infantry, should it be necessary to send them into Munnipoor after the rebels.

Cachar 9th January, 1858.

“” The mutineers of the 34th. N. I. are still in the jungle at the foot of the Boobun range of the hills, hemmed in by parties of the Sylhet Light Infantry on all sides.

2. Since last writing to you the mutineers have only on one occasion been able to procure rice, and this they did by a sortie of 50 men upon the village of Govind-nugger on the skirts of the jungle while our troops were absent in another direction. One or two houses were there plundered and about a day's supply for their band secured.

3. To prevent similar forages on their part all the small villages skirting the jungles have been emptied and scouts have been posted in all directions to give instant notice of their approach.

4. The mutineers are supposed to have with them three or four Bengalees as prisoners and for the purpose of showing them the way, and it still seems to be their intention to make for Munnipoor.

5. Captain Stevens penetrated into the jungles on the 7th instant as far as Doorum Bheel, with a view of coming across the enemy, but he saw no trace of them, so extensive and dense are the wastes in which they lie at present concealed.

6. I have directed the Major Commanding the Munnipoor Force to detach 100 men to the confluence of the Jheeri and the Barak, there to await on their own side of the frontier the coming of the rebels. If able to get as far, it is likely that this will be the point of their passage. But little dependence however is to be placed on the Munnipoor Troops and I doubt much whether there are 20 men among them who have ever fired a gun.

13th January, 1858.

1. "....." The Mutineers, joined by a Munnipoor Prince and his followers, came out of the jungles into a village to the west of Binnacandy yesterday morning at 10 O'clock.

2, Lt. Ross was at that time stationed at Binnacandy

with 100 men and Captain Stevens at Luckipoor with remainder of the force mounting to 150. Of the latter he had just despatched 50 under Lt. Binst, at my request, to strengthen the Sudder Station.

3. This party while proceeding along the northern bank of the river, a short distance from Luckipoor, was fired upon by the mutineers from the opposite bank. This fire was returned by Lt. Binst and the enemy engaged in front.

4. Lt. Ross then advanced from Binnacandy along the southern bank of the river, and attacked their right flank. Captain Stevens and Lt. Binst crossing the river in rafts under cover of this attack, and an action took place which lasted for two hours. The mutineers were beaten from house to house in the village they occupied and at last dispersed and fled back into the jungles to the south, pursued by our troops as long as it was practicable.

5. Seventeen dead were counted on the field among whom was a Jemadar. Two sepoy taken prisoners were shot, and one straggler of the retreating rebels killed by the scouts, making a total of 20 killed besides numbers who must have been badly wounded in the engagement. On our side we lost two men killed and two badly wounded.

6. The conduct of the men both of the Sylhet Light Infantry and the Kookie Levy is described by Captain Stevens as being most excellent, and I am sure his Honor will perceive that, to the European officers

leading the force, the greatest credit is due for the promptness and precision with which they acted, and which secured a victory so decisive and effectual.

7. Doctor Shircore was present with the force in the double capacity of medical officer and in charge of the intelligence department. To his indefatigable exertions Captain Stevens is indebted for the good information which he has all along received of the position and design of the enemy.

8. The sudden withdrawal of the European troops from Sylhet has had no good effect in this district and some of the Munnipoories have been incited to take up arms in favour of the Princes with a view to accompanying the mutineers into Munnipoor and usurping the Government of that country, although they were very very quiet before [¹⁰]. The prince (supposed to be Norindrojeet Sing) has already joined them and six Princes whom I had placed under arrest here to keep them out of mischief have managed to make their escape and will doubtless do the same [¹¹].

9. Great doubts are entertained of the fidelity of the Munnipoor army and it is supposed that they would have no objection to a change of dynasty in their own country. But they have hitherto obeyed the orders I have transmitted to them, and their officers (likely to be favourites of the present Rajah) vouch for their loyalty.

10. The fight at Binnacandy will have the best effect and has not only dispersed the mutineers but will serve to cool the ambition of those princes, who have not

as yet actually committed themselves, as well as tend to keep the Munnipoor force true to their allegiance.

11. In the event of an advance upon Munnipoor being effected by the enemy, I have given directions for a party of 100 men to proceed at once into the valley to afford assistance to Major McCulloch and the Rajah.

12, Three sepoy of the 34th. N. I. taken prisoners by the villagers were tried, sentenced and executed by me the day before yesterday, and 2 stragglers of a party of eight that had separated from the main body after the action at Nogdirgram were killed yesterday by a small party sent out after them.

13. In conclusion I trust that his Honor will be pleased with what has been done and will mark with a sign of his approval the gallant and loyal conduct of the troops and the vigour and energy of the officers who led them.

13th January, 1858.

To

LIEUTT. T. G. ROSS,

Combg. Detachment Sylhet. L. I. B.

“I have great pleasure in transmitting to you the accompanying copy of a letter received from the Government of Bengal, thanking you and the men under your command for the gallantry and loyalty displayed by you in action with the enemy at Mohunpoor in Hyliakandy.

I trust that it is not necessary for me to assure you how cordially I myself congratulate you upon the success which then and subsequently, has attended your exertions."

16th January, 1858

1. I have the Honor to enclose weekly statement of mutineers tried and executed by me under ACT XVII of 1857, during the past week.

2. Since the action at Binnacandy, the mutineers have not shown themselves, but are reported by the scouts to be still in the jungles to the south, at the foot of the Boobun Hills and broken into parties of 4 and 5.

3. It is now said that three Munnipoor Princes had joined the 34th N. I. before the last action, but with only some 20 or 30 followers, and that these Princes encouraged them with hopes of getting abundance of supplies at Luckipoor, and of being joined by a large force of Munnipoories collecting near that place for the purpose of invading Munnipoor.

4. Of these, three Princes it is reported that two have since deserted the mutineers and that the third is still with them being kept as a prisoner.

5. I have desired Captaan Steveng to make no distinction between the mutineers and the Munnipoories with them.

6. I have rewards for Rs. 100/-for the apprehension or betrayal of each of the Princes who have effected

their escape from us, and also for that of Norindrojeet Sing, who is supposed to have joined the rebels.

I have also directed the attachment of all the property, both land and moveables, appertaining to them in Cachar, and likewise that of their followers, and I trust these measures will be confirmed by His Honor, the Lieut Governor.

7. Seven other Princes against whom rumour had began to be busy have been apprehended by me and placed under close arrest.

8. At my request a night march is to be made this evening on the village Lalong, in the neighbouring jungles of which it is reported that the Princes are collecting followers and I trust that it will result in the capture of some of them.

9. Since the affair at Binnacandy 3 mutineers, stragglers, have been caught and shot by Captain Stevens in Camp. This 63 bonafide sepoys of the 34th N. I. counted killed since they entered Cachar.

10. As it is now apparent that portion of our own subjects in this district are in rebellion against the Government, I have the Honor to solicit that you will suggest to the Lieut. Governor the expediency of investing me with powers under ACT XI of 1837 for the trial of such as may be apprehended.

Date.....

1. "....." Captain Stevens moved out yesterday

at noon and entered the jungles at the foot of the Boobun Range with 80 men.

2. The mutineers have been reported to have collected themselves into two bodies, each of between 30 and 40 strong, but unable to combine, owing to the denseness of the jungles. It was to the position of one of these two bodies that the scout led Captain Stevens.

3. After several hour's march through the most intricate country and thick jungles, Captain Stevens came upon the enemy and took them by surprise while cooking. They were posted on a teelah or small hillock, and after exchanging volleys, our men charged up the hill driving the enemy from it, and dispersing them in all directions. Ten mutineers were counted dead on the field and many besides must have been wounded. One regimental barber and two women were taken prisoners, and 20 muskets were taken together with all the clothes and utensils of the party, attacked, those who escaped having nothing but lungoites (loin-clothes) on them. On our side there was no loss, either in killed or wounded.

4. From the statements of the prisoners taken, it would appear that this party have no more muskets among them, and therefore they have become harmless, and will be caught and brought in by the villagers.

5. The position of the other party in the jungle is not accurately known, but they are well watched and have not a chance to escape.

6. The operation of the troops during this week

have been confined to expeditions into the "jungles, similar to the one above recounted, but unsuccessful owing to the denseness of the jungles. The scouts have however being very successful in shooting stragglers and bringing in prisoners and the Rajah of Munnipoor's force have also taken several who were brought into our camp and shot.

7. The following is a list showing to the total numbers of mutineers, bonafide sepoys, killed since they entered Cachar :—

Tried and executed by Civil authority	13
Killed in action	37
Died of wounds	2
Killed by scouts	17
Found dead in jungles	2
Caught by villagers, scouts, troops both Govt. and Munnipoorie, and tried and executed by Military Law :—	39
Total=	110

8. The following individuals belonging to the camp of the mutineers have been taken prisoners and await trial :

Regimental Bheestie	1*(This person sentenced to 14 yrs transportation.)
Regimental Barber	1
Seikh Faqueer (Camp Follower)	1
Chittagong Convicts	10
Women (two badly wounded)	12
Children	7
TOTAL= 32	

One child has died since taken, and one was accidentally shot during the action at Binnakandy. I have the honor to solicit the Lieut. Governor's instruction with reference to the disposal of the women and children. The convicts I am prepared to try when vested with the necessary powers.

9. I have before informed you that the Munnipoories have deserted the mutineers. I have as yet been unable to take any of the princes who joined them or who broke their arrest, but I do not think it possible that they can long escape, as the rewards offered for their apprehension will excite the cupidity of the Bengalees to give information.

10. I am preparing a list of the Munnipoorie Princes resident in Cachar for submission to His Honor through Mr. Allen, with a view to arranging their future disposal. The presence of so many of them (upwards of 30) in this district, almost all having some sort of claim or title to the Guddee of Munnipoor, has already on many

occasions, and is likely to be in future also, the cause of much disturbance, which nothing short of their deportation further west is likely to prevent.

11. No prisoners have been tried by me during the past week under Act XVII of 1857, those taken being sent to camp and executed there by sentence of Drum Head Court Martial.

27th January, 1858.

1. "....." my head scout reported to Captain Stevens yesterday that he discovered the position of a small body of mutineers in the jungles, and Captain Stevens thinking it only one of the fragments of the body he had scattered on the 22nd sent out a party of 30 men under command of Bhuggutbeer Jamadar of the Sylhet Light Infantry to cut it up.

2. The Jamadar, led by the scout, proceeded into the jungles and after some search came upon the mutineers, but found that the small party seen by the scout had been joined by the remaining one of the two large bodies into which the mutineers had formed after the action at Binnacandy, and mustered in all some 40 or 50 strong.

3. These superior numbers, occupying a strong position on the hillock covered with thick bamboo jungle, were attacked by the Jamadar and his party and completely routed. Thirteen were left dead on the field and the remainder including one who was very severely wounded managed to effect their escape.

4. The conduct of the Jamadar Bhuggutbeer and his men is worthy of great praise, the more especially as they came unexpectedly upon such a large body, when they were looking about for a few stragglers only, and I trust that His Honor will mark it with his approval.

5. Independently of the 13 killed in this last affair, 14 have, since the date of my last letter, been killed, making a total of 137 killed since they entered Cachar. This together with number accounted for in Sylhet, Viz. 44, makes 181, so that there cannot be many of them left afoot now.

6. The mutineer still remain in the same dense jungles, and are fairly caught in a trap out of which they possibly cannot escape.

30th. January, 1858.

2. Since last letter I am happy to state for the information of His Honor the Lt. Governor of Bengal that the mutineers of the 34th N. I. have been caught and brought in by twos and threes, by my scouts and villagers, and that the number killed in Cachar now amounts to 162. This when added to the number supposed to have been killed in Sylhet would show a total of 206, besides which many must have died in the jungles of starvation and of wounds, of whom we do not know.

3. I have not been informed as to what was the actual strength of the mutineers when they left Chittagong, but I suspect that we have come pretty nearly to

the end of them. I have therefore directed the Munnipoorie force that were sent by the Rajah, to fall back upon the valley, leaving only a few men to guard the passes and Lt. Ross still remains at Binnakandy with 140 men, as much to guard against the machinations of the Munnipoorie Princes as to account for any surviving mutineers.

2nd January, 1858

1. "....." Norindrojeet Sing, the chief of Munnipoorie Princes, who joined the mutineers before the action of Binnacandy has been apprehended in Munnipoor by the Rajah and is now in confinement in that place. The Prince has a severe wound in the foot which he is supposed to have received at Binnacandy and cannot at present be removed from Munnipoor. I have written to the Political Agent to send him in at once should he happen to be taken in that direction, and I have now the honor to solicit His Honor's instructions as to his disposal when he arrives.

Norindrojeet is a first cousin of the present Rajah, and although seriously opposed him, being himself a claimant to the throne, still I anticipate that it will be with some reluctance that the Rajah will give him up to suffer the punishment which is his due.

3. The mutineers of the 34th. N. I. may be said now no longer to exist. One hundred and sixty-nine sepoy and officers have been killed since they entered Cachar, and the remainder having thrown away their muskets are trying to escape individually or in parties of 2 or 3.

4. Captain Stevens has returned to Cheerapoonjee, the H. Q. of the battalion, but Lt. Ross with 100 men of the Sylhet Light Infantry and 40 of the Kookee Levy is still after them.

To

MAJOR McCULLOCH,

Political agent,

Munnipoor.

2nd February, 1858

1. "....." It gives me much pleasure to hear of the capture of Norindrojeet Sing, and I trust that he will soon meet with the punishment he so well deserves.

2. A Kote Havildar and a sepoy of the 34th. N. I. are supposed to have accompanied Norindrojeet when he left the mutineers force after Binncaandy. He having bound himself by oath to see them clear out of the company's territories. May I request the favour of your informing me whether anything has been heard of them, and if not, of suggesting the expediency of questioning Norindrojeet on the subject.

3. It is just probable that Norindrojeet Sing may think it worth his while to deny having had any treasonable commerce with the mutineers at all, but the proof against him is completed both by means of our own scouts who were at time prisoners in the mutineers camp and through prisoners taken by us.

4. I think it would be most desirable were the Rajah

to send small parties of men to be on the look out at the entrances to the valley on the west, such places as Rocabhooching and Simital, for then they might chance to get hold of any small parties of the mutineers who may have escaped our troops at Luckipoor, and have got on the road avoiding also the Munnipoorie force on the way. There may have been several who have been thus guided by the Bengalees and Munnipoories of Cachar for the sake of money.

On the fifth of February the following letter was sent to captain Stevens, Lt. Binst and Doctor Shircore.

"I have much pleasure in forwarding to you, together with my sincere congratulations, the thanks of the Government of Bengal to you and to the troops who served at Binnacandy.

R. STEWART

2. The mutineers continue to be brought in by ones and twos, but they are now so completely dispersed that the troops have no chance of acting against them, and the operations are almost entirely confined to scouting.

3. The number accounted for in Cachar now amounts to 179, among the 17 killed since my last report were two subadars.

4. Having made over charge of the station to my assistant, Dr. Shircore, I came out here yesterday on circuit and to see how affairs were getting on. I fired the supposed position of the remnant of the mutineers to

be in a belt of jungle close to this, and I have directed the whole to be fired, and propose to enter tomorrow with a line of elephants, mounting four sepoy on each and breathing through. I daresay that this will be the means of driving the remainder out.

Camp Luckipoor, 8th February, 1858

1. "....." The prisoner Nuttah Khan sentenced by me on the 9th ultimo to transportation for 14 years, although guilty of the offences charged against him being a Government servant, was not guilty, in my opinion, to the same extent as a regular sepoy, being simply a water carrier. Moreover his offence was somewhat extenuated by the fact of his having separated himself from the rest of the mutineers with the intention, as declared by him, of giving himself to me.

2. In like manner on the 26th. ultimo I sentenced Jokoo, a barber, attached to the mutineers to transportation for life, he being also simply a camp follower, and not guilty to the same extent as the sepoys. The barber received however a severe punishment because he was actually taken in flight, and without any intention on his own part of yielding.

3. On the 4th inst. I sentenced a bunnia and the son of a sepoy to seven years' transportation only. They were both young men, of 17 or 18 years of age, and although arrived at years of discretion, yet perhaps not quite responsible for their acts, being dependent on their seniors.

To

Lt. Ross. Commanding in Cachar.

Dated Luckipoor, 13th Feb. 1858.

1. There being no longer any necessity for the presence of so many troops in this part of the district, I have the honor to request that you will withdraw those under your command to the station, leaving only a party of 50 of the Sylhet L. I. under a native officer at Luckipoor.

2. The detachment left at Luckipoor will be posted at the godown guard house in this village and will purchase its supplies and fire-wood from the neighbouring bazar, being furnished by the commt. at Silchar with those articles which are not procurable here.

13th. February, 1858

1. "....." I have engaged in scouring the jungles in this vicinity with scouts and mounted sepoy and have only succeeded in accounting for the 6 mutineers, making a total of 185 killed since entering Cachar, in the following manner :—

Tried and executed by the civil authority	14
Killed in action	57
Found dead in the jungles	8
Killed by scouts in the field	37
Brought in by troops, both Govt. and Munnipoorie,	...
Scouts, Kookies and villagers, and shot by sentence of Drum Head Court Martial	69
TOTAL =	185

2. The list of camp followers taken stands now as follows :—

Regimental Bheestie	1	Transportation for 14 years
„ Barber	1	„ „ life
„ Bunnia	1	„ „ 7 years
Sepoy's son	1	„ „ „
Sheikh Fqueer	1	Awaiting Trial
Chittagong convicts	10	„ „
Women	13	„ „
Children	11	(two since dead)
<hr/> TOTAL		39

3. It is possible that there may be one or two of these mutineers alive, but far more probable that they have died of starvation in the depth of the jungles ; one or two may also have escaped back westwards, but of those nothing certain is known, and I think the number killed must be very near indeed to that of the mutineers when they entered the district.

4. About 110 or 120 stands of arms have been taken from the enemy and about Rs. 30,000 of the plundered Chittagong treasure recovered, but of those I will send a detailed account when I return to the Sudder station, together with an account of the expenses I have been put to in giving rewards, etc.

5. The mutineers having been finished off and the rebellious Munnipoories being nowhere to be found, I

do not think that it is necessary to keep such large detachments of troops any longer in the field. I have therefore directed Lt. Ross to return to the Sudder Station, leaving only 50 men at this place, and have ordered the withdrawal of the remaining portion of the Munnipoorie army to its own Head quarters.

15th. February, 1858

1. "....." I forwarding a list of Munnipoorie Princes with a view to settling their future disposal.....

2. I have the honor to request that you will be so good as to inform me who are the Princes most obnoxious to the Government of the Rajah of Munnipoor, and who in the opinion of that Government ought to be removed from Cachar.....and how much the Rajah is prepared to pay towards their maintenance.

3. It is possible that the Rajah having got rid of many of the Princes out of his own country, and feeling assured of the protection of our Government, may demur to incurring any expense on their account. But it is necessary that he should be informed that his own house is on fire. It will not do to throw the burning brands on the thatch of another without contributing to the supply of water which is to put them out.

4. I think that the most equitable arrangement which could be entered into between the two Govern-

ments would be for the Rajah to name some four or five of those whom he principally suspects of entertaining sinister designs towards himself. The like number of the most troublesome in Cachar being afterwards nominated by me, and the expenses of the maintenance of both at a distance from the Frontier equally shared.

5. The above is merely a suggestion and if not acceptable, I have no doubt that many other arrangements will propose themselves, whereby the chronic state alarm, in which both Cachar and Munnipoor are uniformly placed by the ambitious designs of these Princes, may be removed,

To Captain Dewaul. Comdg.

Detacht. Late 34th N. I.

17th February, 1858

1. With reference to the late mutiny at Chittagong and to the operations which have been undertaken against the mutineers of the 34th N. I, since they entered Cachar and Sylhet, I have the honor to inform you that 185 fighting men have been killed in this district and that 44 were killed in Sylhet and Tipprah, and request the favour of your letting me know how many of your men of all ranks left Chittagong, in order that I may determine the number at present still unaccounted for.

2. It is currently reported that one, Rajbullee Khan, a havildar, who is supposed to have been the leader of the rebels, has escaped westward, together

with his wife, and one or two others. I have the honor to request therefore that you will furnish me with a description roll of this man, together with a description of his wife, if such also can be procured, in order that a hue and cry may be raised in the neighbouring district.

3. The Seikh Faqeer regarding whom you wrote to Captain Stevens was very fortunately saved by what you said of him from perhaps the severest punishment short of death, and I have no doubt that if you communicated with me more freely on matters connected with this mutiny, not only would much more be elicited, but the end of justice would be more equitably answered.

17th February. 1858

1. I have the honor to forward the accompanying list showing the names and native places of the women captives taken from the mutineers of the 34th N. I.

2. I have also the honor to forward the accompanying extract from a private letter addressed to Captain Stevens by Captain Dewaul late in command of the detachment at Chittagong by which his Honor will perceive that the Seikh Faqeer, who was taken, may be held guiltless. This man was taken alone, and no money or valuables whatever were found upon him, which was not the case with the women, many of them being laden with rupees and ornaments. I request the favour of your being informed how the faqeer is to be disposed of.

The following letter, though only indirectly concerned with the Mutiny may be of interest, as it concerns the defence of Cachar, and incidentally of Tea Gardens.

20th February, 1858

1. I submit.....the following report upon the defences necessary for this District and to suggest the means of providing them with as little expense as possible to the state.

2. His Honor is aware that on three sides of Cachar we have an exposed frontier. On the North East lies the tract of country inhabited by the wild and savage tribes of the Angamie and Kutcha Nagas, who constantly attack and plunder the villages in the hills both of this district and of North Cachar, massacring all who may fall into their hands. On the south we have similarly wild and untameable tribes of Lhoochais and Pays, on whom no reliance is to be placed. And on the East the Independnt State of Munnipoor.

3. For the defence of the North-eastern Frontier it is necessary to have guards posted in the villages upon line of boundary all along. And no less than four are thus situated at different villages in that direction. These guards have frequently and even lately been instrumental in protecting the villages at which they are stationed from direct attack, and such is their importance that if they were withdrawn the sites of the villages in the North East would immediately be deserted.

4. On the South also there are four guards *stationed at stockaded posts for the purpose of protecting our cultivation and the population in that direction from the ravages of the Lhoochais, and their presence is most beneficial, covering as it does all the Tea Plantations which have recently been taken up by Europeans in this district. Were these guards not pushed on towards the South, as cultivation extend in that direction, it would not be possible to get settlers to take up the fire tracts of waste lands which lie within our boundary on that side, much of which lands were in former times actually under cultivation, but obliged to be deserted owing to the pertinacity with which the Southern tribes continued their attacks. The Tea Planters would also find it difficult to induce the Bengalees to go over in that direction to labour for them, as the greatest fear prevails over the people, caused by the atrocities perpetuated by the Lhoochais in their warfare.

5. On the East, the State of Munnipoor, dependent on us for its integrity, and to which a European Officer is deputed as Political Agent, might seem to offer a safe and inoffensive Frontier, but in truth it serves only as a weak barrier or outpost between ourselves and the Burmese, a barrier which might at any time be easily surmounted by the latter power did it feel so inclined. The Munnipoorie army is I believe nominally 3000 strong but most inefficiently armed, all the muskets being old and most of them entirely unserviceable. It is much to be feared also that in case of an invasion of the Burmese, there would be a strong faction in Munnipoor in favour

of the invaders, as the Government of the present Rajah does not appear to be a very popular one owing to the fact of his being a descendant of a younger branch of the Royal Family, members of the older branches being in exile both in Burma and Cachar.

6. But it is not from fear of any direct attack either from Munnipoor or Burma that the presence of troops is necessary in Cachar with reference to our Eastern Frontier. Speedy intimation would doubtless be given were any such movement contemplated by these two states, and troops could be concentrated from other points to meet it. It is from the fact that about one fourth of the population of Cachar itself consists of Munnipoories, most of whom have been banished from Munnipoor, or who have fled either from political causes or oppression. Among these are many members of the Royal Family, who lay claim to the throne itself, and where title is considered accordingly to the right of Primogeniture is superior to that of the present occupant. All, of these, both Princes and subjects, are actuated by but one wish, that of being able to return to their own country. This can only be effected by the ejection of the present Rajah, and the substitution of the Prince whose cause is at the moment most popular, and the consequence is that Cachar is made the theatre of intrigues carried on by these refugees against the Government of Munnipoor.

7. The services of Ghombeer Sing, the father of the present Rajah of Munnipoor, in the Burmese War

of 1824-26 gained for him the throne of Munnipoor after the Burmese had evacuated the country, and our Government continue to assure the succession to his descendants. It has always therefore been the duty of the superintendent of Cachar to frustrate any designs on the part of the Munnipoorie exiles in Cachar towards the Government of Munnipoor. But such is the clanish nature of this nation, so secretly do they conduct their plots and conspiracies speaking as they do a language unintelligible to the rest of the inhabitants, and holding their meetings in the depths of the vast jungles of this district, that it has been found impossible to counteract them, until they have developed themselves and it can then only be done by the instrumentality of troops in the field.

8. It must not be forgotten either that Munnipoories were once the Rulers of Cachar, [12] and at no longer distance of time than the year preceding the invasion of this district by the Burmese. That this is borne in mind by them was fully revealed to me in the events which have recently taken place. When the mutineers of the 34th N. I. entered Cachar and their strength and intentions were unknown, the agitation amongst the Munnipoorie population was extreme, and the station was threatened each day with attack. Notice of this design came to me so often and from such different quarters that I could not but feel assured of their truth to a certain extent, and the account given by a scout, who was a prisoner in the camp of the mutineers, when the Munnipoorie Prince, Norindrojeet Sing, joined

the enemy, amply verifies my apprehension. This account was to the following effect. That after recruiting themselves at Luckipoor the mutineers joined by the Munnipoorie population who were all prepared to assist, and possibly by the Hindustanie sepoy among our own troops, should return to the station, loot the Treasury and the Magazine, and make themselves master of the country ; after which an invasion on Munnipoor was contemplated, and when Norindro-jeet Sing had been fairly installed, he promised either to retain the mutineers in his own service or lead them through Assam and Nepaul to their own Country.

9. With such a spirit among the Munnipoorie population both towards the Government of their own country and towards our own, the necessity of keeping up a force in the district, sufficient at any time to quell any of their sudden insurrections, must be apparent, and in order to do this it will be necessary, after providing for the defence of our southern and northeastern Frontiers, and for the defence of the station itself, to keep about 150 to 200 men fit for immediate service in the field, ready in quarters.

10. The troops generally posted in Cachar consist nominally of 3 companies of the Sylhet Light Infantry, supposed to be 240 strong, but their numbers actually scarcely exceed half that strength ; and of the Kooky Levy numbering 200 bayonets. Of the Sylhet Light Infantry 25 form the escort of the Political Agent of Munnipoor and are to all intents and purposes ineffective

for any purposed offensive or defensive in Cachar. Of the remainder 25 are posted at a stockade in Hyliakandy, and the rest exclusively occupied in furnishing guards for the defence of their own lines, the Treasury and the Magazine, leaving not a man available even for their own relief, much less for active service in the field should such be necessary. Of the Kookie Levy the general distribution is noted in the margin, and it will be seen that hardly a man of that body either, remains available for field service.

11. In addition to the guards which it has always been custom to post on our Southern and North-eastern Frontiers, and which are indispensably necessary, I feel it now requisite to keep a strong party posted at Luckipoor on the east, also to act as a check to Munni-poorie intrigue. Indeed ever since I obtained the superintendency of this district, I have had a small party of the Kookie Levy stationed there but it is a post requiring 50 men atleast. In addition to this and beyond the number of troops allotted for the defence of the Frontier, there ought to be, independently of troops for the relief of line and station guards, at least 120 men ready to move out of the station at a moments notice, without denuding it.

12. The Sylhet Light Infantry, appear to be too well occupied Westward to be able to afford to give the required numbers to Cachar. The small number already stationed here appear to be grudged, and on the occasion of slight emergency, such as the despatch of a Treasure

party to Dacca, or anything of that kind, troops are generally drawn from Cachar. It is moreover probable that in default of other accustomed troops to the West, the services of the Sylhet Infantry, will be still further extended in that direction, and that fewer will be able to remain in Cachar.

13. Under the circumstance I would strongly urge upon the Government the expediency of increasing the numbers of the Kookie Levy for local service. It is a measure which I think, would be attended with less expense than any other, providing for the effectual defence of Cachar and the Frontier in general. In raising the Kookies we arm a people with neither Political power nor prestige but who are at the same time naturally brave and inured to this climate and to the warfare that the presence of so much jungle on this frontier is likely to offer. Further, we enlist a people in our service than whom no other could act as a better check against the Munnipoories. People who have no sympathy with the caste or creed of any other in Hindustan, and who are moreover bound to us, for the Protection they have received since they came into our territories.

14. Of the services of the few men of the Kookie Levy occupied in recent operations His Honor already knows. But the services of the Tribes do not end there, and about as many men of the mutineers of the 34th N. I. as were killed in action by our troops, were killed in separate conflict or brought in as prisoners

by the Kookie villagers whom I had organised for the occasion and armed as scouts. An increase to the Kookie Levy would be a fitting reward to the men, many of whom would enlist, as well as being an advantage to ourselves.

15. The measure I would therefore prepare for the consideration of the Lieutt. Governor would be the increase of the Kooke Levy from 200 men to 640, duly officered by natives. And I would further recommend the appointment of an adjutant and two European non-commissioned officers, in additon to myself as Commandant, to insure the proper training and discipline of the men. With such a force in Cachar when properly organised, the services of the Sylhet Light Infantry might be entirely dispensed with and made available for employment further West. And at the same time the District remain efficiently and chieply defended.

16. The pay of the Kookie Levy is at present rupees 5 per mensem. Moderate as this allowance is, it is sufficient to bring the required number of Kookies to the standard, but as it would be necessary to mix with the Kookies other races as well, in the proportion of at least one to three and as such good material as Goorkahs are at hand, to whom it would be necessary to offer an increased rate of pay, I think that 6 rupees a month would not be too much, and at that standard would I recommend the augmentation.

20th Feb. 1858.

I have just been informed that another of the fugitive Munnipoorie Princes has escaped into Munnipoor, where the Rajah has people out for his apprehension. After one who is supposed to have fled into the Lhoochais Country, I have despatched a party of scouts with a view to warn the Lhoochais to give him up.

25th Feb. 1858

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th instant informing me of the apprehension of Howjou, a Munnipoorie Prince who broke his arrest at this place, and in reply request that you will cause the Rajah to have him sent to me as soon as it is convenient, in order that the object of his running away may be investigated.

27th Feb. 1858.

1.this district is fast resuming its wonted quietness.

2. Three more mutineers of the 34th N. Infry were apprehended during the past week attempting to escape to the westward. After some resistance they were captured by the villagers and have been tried and executed by me.

3. These last say that they formed part of a body of ten who escaped from the field of Binnacandy, and crossing the river entered the jungles on the opposite

side. They have been, they say, separated from the other seven for some time, and do not know whether they have been killed or not. As the place where these last three were captured renders it possible that their comrades have made for North Cachar, I have written to the officer in charge of that district to put him on his guard.

6th March 1858

..... all is quiet in Cachar. One more mutineer was caught by the villagers a few days ago, endeavouring to make his way to the west.

13th March, 1858

..... there is nothing to relate with reference to any disturbances in Cachar. During the last week all remains quiet.

The above is repeated on March 20th, 27th, April 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th.

10th. May. 1858.

1. Norindrojeet Sing, having been sent to Cachar by the Rajah of Munnipoor, I have tried him under Act XIV of 1857.

2. The evidence against him is most complete, even although he himself denies the charge of even having joined the mutineers at all. Three camp followers and six women belonging to the party of mutineers who.

were with them when the Munnipoories joined and who before Norindrojeet Sing's capture had described the man, although they did not know his name, recognised him at once ; and besides there were two Bengalees who were prisoners at the time in the camp of the mutineers. Doctor Shircore also deposes to having heard a sepoy of the 34th N. Infantry mention his name before execution, and describes the wound on his instep as a gun shot one, the Prince who joined being reported as wounded on the foot.

3. The defence set up by Norindrojeet Sing is that he was in the direction of Luckipoor when the disturbance commenced for the purpose of buying rice and that hearing that I wanted to confine him, he kept out of the way and eventually went to Munnipoor. The wound on his instep he describes as having been inflicted by a bamboo splinter and he summons witness, of whom only one can be found and that one denies all knowledge of anything concerning him.

4. Although one of the witnesses expressly states that the purpose of Norindrojeet Sing was to take possession of Cachar, yet I do not think that his object was anything else but to secure the throne of Munnipoor, although it is possible that the conquest of Cachar may have been mooted in the mutineers' camp. In his excuse it has to be said that he is a very ignorant man and that his title to the throne of Munnipoor may be considered superior to that of the present occupant, Norindrojeet Sing being the son of an elder brother. He has

moreover been forgiven by his cousin in power, who has, I believe, addressed the Supreme Government in his favour.

5. Taking these circumstances into consideration I am of the opinion that it would be inexpedient to sentence this prisoner capitally, and would recommend his confinement for life as a state prisoner.

6. I have taken the advantage of a large batch of prisoners proceeding to Calcutta under a strong guard and have forwarded Norindrojeet Sing along with them. His presence, and that of the other princes in Cachar, is not calculated to allay the excitement which has recently prevailed approve of the step I have taken, instead of awaiting orders upon a reference.

7. The Princes, Howjou and Khocrapha, who escaped from jail in Cachar, where they were confined under suspicion, have also been tried. They cannot be found guilty of any specific offence except that of jail breaking, which they say they were induced to do from dread of the numerous executions which were then taking place. But their escape was so exactly timed with the junction of Norindrojeet and his party with the mutineers that I have little doubt that it was pre-concerted. The Princes also accompany the guard proceeding with the convicts.

4th June 1858

To

The Magistrate of the 24th Pergunnahs, Calcutta.

1. I have the honor to advise you of the despatch of a boat containing one Seikh Faqueer and twelve women and nine children being the camp followers of the party of mutineers of the 34th N. I. who were hunted down in Cachar.

2. The Seikh Faqueer, who did some good service to Captain Dewal at Chittagung when the mutiny broke out has been pardoned, and is to be sent to his home. The women are also, by order of the Govt. to be sent to their houses in as comfortable manner as possible.

In a letter written to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal on the 15th. June, 1858, with reference to the troops stationed in Cachar, Stewart mentions that he does not think it essential that a European Force should be sent to the District. He however mentions that a petition was sent to the Governor-General from the Planters of Cachar praying for the protection of a party of English Soldiers. He is entirely against the idea and mentions that there is no barrack accommodation for English troops and their supplies would also create a difficulty.

After this references to the Mutiny disappear from the records but on the 28th of February, 1859, there is

a letter containing a reference to Kannai Sing, one of the Munnipoorie Princes who escaped from jail in January, 1858. He is described as a very dangerous character, and "I also lose no time in forwarding him Calcutta."

On the 11th of March he appears to have been successful in persuading the Government to rid Cachar of some of the Munnipoorie Princes and gives a list of eleven who had been despatched to Naddeah.

NOTES

1. 'Lhoochais or the Lushais is the old name for the Mizos, the inhabitants of modern Mizoram.

2. A number of disgruntled Manipuri princes were residing in Cachar at that period. They were very much prone to make armed raids inside Manipur for capturing the throne, the claim on which they had to abandon under British pressure. For details see *Cachar District Records* (Debabrata Dutta, Silchar).

3. Pertabghur or Pratapgarh is the old name of Patherkandi in Karimganj Subdivision.

4. Juffirghur was situated in the vicinity of the modern railway junction of Baraigram. Renowned historian. Achyut Charan Choudhury, the author of 'Srihatter Itibritta', was a descendant of these choudhuries and he himself mentioned that his forefathers had deployed one Kala Mia to collect information as to the movements of the Sepoys.

5. Major Byng was killed in the hands of the sepoys at Latu in the encounter that took place on the 18th December, 1857. Captain Stewart perhaps received the news of this mishap later since he did not mention it in his letter dated the 22nd December, 1857.

6. The Cachar Tea Company had received a grant of 12, 508 acres on 1st May, 1856 from the Government and during the mutiny they were conducting their survey work. Perhaps in recognition of its services, the Company received a further land grant of 16, 508 acres.

7. Chandrakirtee Singh was the Raja of Manipur at that period.

8. Only twenty six sepoy's were killed at Latu. Some of them were buried in a nearby hillock which is still visited by people.

9. Howar or Haor is a local term denoting marshy regions that takes the look of a natural lake in the rainy season.

10. Actually the situation inside Manipur itself was not safe for the Rajah. Debendra Singh, Kanhai Singh, Gokul Singh (all princes) and other members of the royal family were conspiring all the time against the Rajah.

11. These princes were Nawal Singh, Kanai Singh, Bhuban Singh, Sango Taba, Khero and Maipha.

12. Three Manipuri princes Sarjit Singh, Marjit Singh and Gambhir Singh actually divided the plains of Cachar among themselves in 1819 and the situation continued till 1823.

APPENDIX

The following extracts from the relevant books relate the events and encounters experienced by the fugitive sepoys from Chittagang before they could reach Cachar :

(I) "In November 1857, three companies of the 34th Native Infantry stationed at Chittagong mutinied and after burning their lines, breaking open the jail and plundering the treasury, marched in the direction of Comila ; then they turned off into the jungles of Hill Tippera, whence they subsequently emerged in the south-east of the Sylhet district. Their intention was to push on, through the south of Cachar, into Manipur. As soon as Mr. Allen heard of their movements, he determined to intercept them. Under his orders, Major Byng, the commandant of the Sylhet Light Infantry (now the 8th Gurkha Rifles), set out with about 160 men and reached Pertabgarh, some eighty miles distant, in the short space of thirty six hours. Then, hearing that the rebels were expected shortly to pass through Latu, twenty eight miles away, he made a night march and arrived there early next morning. The rebels, numbering about two hundred, came up soon afterwards. They tried by taunts and solicitations to prevent the Hindustanis, who formed half the detachment, but only answer they received was steady fire, which put them to flight with a loss of twenty six killed. Major Byng was also killed. His successor in the command did not think it advisable to follow them into jungle, but a few days later, after entering the Cachar district, they were attacked by another detachment of the Sylhet Light Infantry under Lieutenant Ross, and were again put to flight."

(From *History of Assam*, E. A. Gait, pp. 378-79).

(II) "In Chittagong, the govt. had three hundred soldiers. When the news of the mutiny reached there, these three hundred soldiers rebelled. They looted Rs. 278267 from the collector's office, took three elephants, freed prisoners and through Tripura marched into Sylhet.

There they, through intimidation, procured food from Souchh^a Ali Khan, the old father of Maulavi Ahmed Khan, the Zaminder of Lungla. At a later time, it was with much difficulty, that the Zaminder was able to prove his innocence.

When the news reached Major Byng of the Sylhet Light Infantry, he promptly marched his infantry towards Pratapgarh. Reaching there, they learnt that the sepoys had left for Latu. Major Byng and his soldiers immediately started for Latu, leaving behind half-cooked

The British soldiers met the rebels near Latu bazar. The rebels took shelter on the *malgar* (treasury) hillock on the bank of the river and started firing on the British soldiers. The soldiers were stationed on the bank below. The first round took Major Byng who instantly died. Soon another five soldiers were killed and one was seriously injured. Subedar Ajodhya Singh showed great skill and won the battle. The incident is known as the battle of Latu. The rebels left behind them 26 of their comrades who were dead and hid themselves in the jungle."

[Translated from Bengali from *Srihatter Itibritta* : Achyut Charan Tatwanidhi].

